

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE



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For more information, contact:  
Mike Gowrylow  
(360) 486-2113

Brian Moran, Asst. Atty. Gen.  
Barbara Bailey, Asst. Atty Gen.  
Darryl Roosendaal, Investigator  
Attorney General's Office  
(206) 464-6430

**Contractor charged with felony theft of sales tax**

**Tacoma, Wash., March 19, 2003**—The operator of a Fife contracting business was charged today with stealing more than \$143,000 in retail sales tax he collected on his jobs.

The Financial Crimes Unit of the state Attorney General's Office charged Robert C. Dingman of Gig Harbor with six counts of first-degree theft. Each charge is subject to a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$20,000 fine. The charges were brought at the request of the Washington State Department of Revenue. Dingman is scheduled to be arraigned at 1:30 p.m. April 2 in Pierce County Superior Court.

According to charging papers filed in Pierce County Superior Court, Dingman, 56, was president of D&D Contractors, Inc., doing business as Quality Home Enclosures. The business specialized in the sale and installation of sunrooms, patio rooms and deck enclosures. The business closed late last year amid numerous consumer complaints of failure to perform.

The investigation began after Quality Home Enclosures failed to file any state excise tax returns in 2000 and early 2001, despite evidence that it was doing business and collecting sales taxes on its contracts. After being contacted by a Department of Revenue auditor, the company filed the returns but failed to include any remittance.

The complaint alleges that Dingman exerted unauthorized control over sales tax trust funds paid by his customers with the expectation that he would forward them to the Department of Revenue as required by law.

Dingman's former bookkeepers told investigators that Dingman "placed a low priority on meeting his tax obligations." In fact, his business license had been revoked in California for failure to pay taxes. He moved to Washington in 1998 and formed Quality Home Enclosures in 1999.

Former employees told investigators that Dingman habitually paid personal expenses from company bank accounts and disguised these disbursements as business expenses. He also used company funds to purchase vehicles, a residence, personal watercraft and improvements to another boat, according to the charging papers.

An examination of bank records showed that Dingman wrote numerous checks of up to \$10,000 to himself and to cash, and repeatedly tapped the company's account through ATM withdrawals.

Some former employees also believe that Dingman used some of the funds to support a gambling habit. He took periodic trips to Reno and Las Vegas, and also visited casinos in the Puget Sound area. An analysis of some gambling records indicates that Dingman lost thousands of dollars playing craps and blackjack in 2000 and 2001.-

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